

## BETWEEN MELANCHOLY AND DYSTOPIA JIA AILI – APOCALYPTIC SCENES IN OIL

Isolated figures in surreal-looking landscapes: the oil paintings by the Chinese artist Jia Aili are of unrivaled intensity. Aili's first monograph *Stardust Hermit* reflects upon his work from recent decades and sketches a futuristic scenario in which humankind is merely an episode.

Berlin, March 10, 2017 – Jia Aili was born in the northern Chinese city of Dandong in 1979, a town on the North Korean border, known for its icy winters and gloomy horizons. The melancholic mood of this landscape is also mirrored in Aili's work. After studying painting at the Lu Xun Academy of Fine Arts in Shenyang, the artist established his characteristic style, which combines contemporary atmospheres with a traditional figurative style derived from studies of western culture's Old Masters.

The drastic alteration of China over the past fifty years serves as the theme of Aili's large paintings. His works convey a sense of astonishment and fascination in the face of technological progress. The painter looks at rapid urbanization with a melancholic, reflective gaze. Aili's epic, visionary paintings feature human beings in apocalyptic surroundings. Scenes of ruins are populated by individual figures confronted with a merciless environment.

Francis Bacon knew that "the job of the artist is always to deepen the mystery," and this quote has found its way into the foreword of *Jia Aili. Stardust Hermit*. The publication documents his exhibitions from recent decades, using samples of individual works to reveal the various sources of inspiration employed by this young, retiring Chinese artist.



### JIA AILI STARDUST HERMIT

Text by Nicola Foulkes, graphic design by Julia Wagner, foreword by Fabien Frys, contributions by Phil Tinari

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Especially in the digital age, Hatje Cantz regards itself an element linking museums, artists, galleries, collectors, and art lovers. Conveying knowledge - in terms of both content and visuals - as well as an enthusiasm for art is always at the heart of our engagement.

In keeping with our ambition to make it possible to experience art beyond the medium of the book, Hatje Cantz has launched the EDITION GERD HATJE as we continue to expand our portfolio of strictly limited, signed editions featuring works on paper, photographic works of art, and art objects.

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